

CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

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VOL. I.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xxiii. 34.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS.

Hardly any occurrence in the life of our Lord is more obscure, more liable to perplex us with conjecture, or to embarrass us with speculation, than his temptation. Various endeavours have been made, and various modes devised by commentators, to remove the difficulties of the history, and to obviate the objections of the gainsayer. Some have thought that the whole transaction took place in a prophetic vision or dream—but I must confess, that the narrative of the temptation in the two Evangelists, has every appearance of being the relation of *what really happened*. The great difficulty is, whether the tempter, who is spoken of, were really that *fallen angel*, to whom in popular language, the origin of all evil is imputed, or only a wicked and ambitious miscreant, to whom his name is given—for I can never believe, as has been taught by some, that the whole arose merely from even the momentary suggestions of ambition in the breast of Christ.

The solution of this perplexing question may be facilitated by considering that it is usual for the sacred writers to give the name Satan, or Devil, to those persons who are adversaries to truth and righteousness, or who endeavour to seduce their fellow-creatures from the straight path of duty, to ensnare them in sin, and to make them err from that line of conduct to which God commands them to adhere: and he who makes this attempt is *ἁγιάζων*, or the tempter. Thus the word Devil, or Satan, which are often employed promiscuously, is generally used to signify any calumniator of, or enemy to, the truth; any one who, by art, or subtlety, or violence, endeavours to hinder the progress, or to deceive and to oppose the advocates of Christianity. Thus Paul, Titus, ii. 3. enjoins the elder women

not to be *διαβολαί*, devils, or given to calumniating; and, 2 Tim. iii. 3. among other words, expressive of great depravity, he uses *διαβολαί*, devils, given to calumny. And, Ephes. iv. 27. he says, "Give not way to the Devil," or do not so act as to afford any fair occasion of reproach to the adversaries of the truth. And the word has a similar meaning, 1 Tim. iii. 7. "He must have a good report of them that are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the Devil," John, vi. 70,—meaning an enemy or false accuser. In Matthew, xvi. 23. we find our Lord says to Peter, "Get thee behind me Satan," meaning simply, but in the language of indignation—Thou Enemy,—that is an enemy in giving evil and pernicious counsels. The word Satan has a similar signification in 1 Chron. xxi. 1. "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel"—St. Peter says, "Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the Devil, like a roaring lion, is roaming about, seeking whom he may destroy;" where the word Devil is used to denote the sanguinary adversaries of the Christian faith. Thus says St. Paul, 1 Thess. ii. 18. "We would have come unto you, but Satan hindered us:" where the word does not signify a fallen angel, but some wicked enemy or enemies to the Christian cause,—I think therefore that, with the judicious Rosenmuller, we may fairly infer, that he who is said to have tempted our Lord in the desert, and to whom the appellation DEVIL is given, was some crafty and wicked miscreant, some designing and factious man, who wished to seduce Jesus from the path of duty; and probably to render him subservient to his own ambitious project and interested views. We are to bear in mind that, at this time, there was a general expectation of the coming of the Messiah among the Jews, and that this expect-

tation had already induced one or two persons, and, particularly, Theudas, who is mentioned in Acts, to counterfeit the Messiah, and to render the public wish and the popular belief subservient to their projects of personal aggrandisement and temporal dominion. Any person who, at this period of the Jewish history, would promise to deliver them from the Roman yoke, to revive their national glory and restore their departed independence, was sure to meet with a favourable hearing, to have numbers flock to his standard, and willingly share his dangers and his toils. It seems very probable to me that the artful person in question, who is said to have tempted Jesus, and who perhaps was a man possessed of considerable influence and authority among his countrymen, was fluctuating in doubt respecting the real character of Jesus,—that is whether he were the Messiah, or an impostor, whom he might bring over to second his own secret projects of aggrandisement.—From conversation, which it is probable he had with Jesus previous to the temptation, and from the wonderful attestation to his character by the descent of the dove at his baptism, and which he had either seen himself or heard from others, he could not but think that, if Jesus were not really the Messiah, he was at least some extraordinary person; some one superior to the common level of mankind—and consequently very capable of being made a fit instrument in the promotion of those factious designs which this wicked incendiary seems to have entertained.—We find, therefore, that he begins his temptations, by endeavouring to obtain some further evidence to dispel his doubts whether Jesus were or were not the Messiah. And as, at the time when he first addressed him, Jesus, having for forty days abstained from his ordinary food, was overcome

with hunger, he artfully proposes to him to turn some of the stones, which lay near where they were discoursing, into loaves of bread. He says, "*If thou be the Son of God,*" expressing great doubt whether he were or not, "order this stone to become a loaf."—Judging of the sensations of Jesus by his own, the insidious hypocrite perhaps imagined, that his pride, offended by the insinuation that he was about to act a feigned character, would make him work the miracle which he desired, and particularly when it was of such a character as tended to alleviate the painful feelings of hunger by which Jesus was oppressed. But Jesus, who was not to be incited either by offended pride, or by impatient hunger, to do any thing contrary to the will of God, with equal wisdom and resignation replies, "*It is written: man shall not live by bread alone; but by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God,*" meaning that God can support the life of man, not only by bread, but by any other means, which he appoints, or any other thing which he chooses to make use of for that purpose.

(Concluded in our next)

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Dialogue between a Universalist and a Limitarian.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 142.

(*Lim. in continuation.*)

The paragraph beginning at the 29th verse of this chapter has been understood to apply directly to the final dissolution of the material system. "Immediately after the tribulation in those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heaven shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven: And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." I will here give the reasons which convince me that this description was by no means designed to signify the dissolution of material nature.

1. The language used in this passage is similar to the figurative language

used by the prophets in describing the destruction of cities. See Isaiah xiii. 9, 10. "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine." Such is the language of the prophet in setting forth the overthrow of Babylon. In describing the judgments of God on the land of Idumea this prophet uses similar language in his 34th chapter; "And all the hosts of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their hosts shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree." Ezekiel speaks of the destruction of Egypt as follows, see chap. xxxii "And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God."

2. In the whole of this account it is worthy of notice, that the Saviour spake to his disciples in manner and language exactly as if he was sure that they would live to see those things all fulfilled.

3. The Saviour himself seemed to take all the precaution necessary to confine the fulfilment of these events to the generation in which he lived. The next words to the paragraph above quoted are the following: "Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." With these reasons under due consideration, it would seem no small perversion to apply the passage under consideration to any thing now future, or subsequent to that generation in which Jesus lived.

Having carefully examined the reading thus far, and finding it put beyond all dispute, that the time of the destruc-

tion of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews was the time to which our Saviour alluded, and these events the subjects of his prophecy, I then examined with all possible care to ascertain, whether any event, of which we read in the remainder of this chapter, or in the 25th, was referred to a later period of time than the generation to which Jesus confined those events which have already been noticed. I can hardly express my surprise on finding that the whole of what we read in these chapters is necessarily referable to the same time. So that these passages which have been so much used to represent what our divines have called the last day, the last judgment, and the end of the material world, have been totally misapplied by such a use. Not the least intimation is there in all the 25th chapter, of any event, but those noticed in the 24th; only that in the 25th the events spoken of in the 24th are illustrated by parables.

After speaking in the strongest terms possible of the certain fulfilment of those great events in that generation, Jesus proceeds, saying: But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. Of what day and hour did the Saviour here speak? Of the day and the hour, in which those events should take place, of which he had spoken, and which he had limited to that generation. He still proceeds: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the son of man be." Here keep in mind that Jesus is speaking of his coming, which is the same coming as expressed in verse 30th: "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left.—Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Observe the Saviour here speaks of the same time and of the same event as before, and speaks as if he was sure that his disciples would live to see these things take place. In the conclusion of this 24th chapter, Jesus warns

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his disciples against being off their guard, and against apostatizing from his faith and the christian virtues. "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart my Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrite; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Here it appears evident that the Saviour alluded to the speech which he had just delivered to the Jews, in the temple, in hearing of his disciples; in which he called the scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, on whom the judgments of which he spake were about to fall. He gives his disciples warning, that if any, who professed his name, should apostatize, or practise wickedness they would have their lot cast with the hypocritical Jews, whose destruction he was then pointing out.

The 25th chapter commences with evident reference to the same time which had before been restricted to that generation. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins," &c. When? Answer when those events of which he had been speaking should take place. The parables which here follow were evidently spoken to illustrate various particulars, which had been concisely stated. See verse 31: "When the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." It is very evident that the Saviour here spake of the same thing of which mention is made in chapter xxiv. 30, 31. Observe the similarity; "And they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." So in the other chapter—"When the son of man shall come in his glory," evidently alluding to the same time. "And he shall send his angels," &c. So in the other place: "With his holy angels," &c.

Without extending my remarks any further, on a subject, which to you must be familiar, I will suppose that you are in possession of my mind on the last of the queries which you submitted for my careful solution. I am entirely satisfied that all the events of

which the Saviour spake in the 24th and 25th of Matthew, are necessarily referred to the generation in which the Saviour lived in the flesh. This conviction has been obtained with no small study and effort of mind, rendered necessary, not from the least ambiguity there is in any part of those scriptures under consideration, for there appears one uninterrupted detail of matters about which the disciples of Jesus asked him, but my difficulties arose entirely from erroneous opinions which had been imbibed in my youth, and deeply impressed on my mind by my pious parents and the minister on whose preaching I attended. From a child I have heard so much said about the last judgment, the final judgment, the awful day of doom, the end of the world, the great burning day, &c. &c. that it seemed to me a reality that these words, and the terrific ideas they had communicated to my tortured mind were all here in these chapters. If I ever read them, it was with such feelings of horror that I knew nothing of what I read, and if any person had asked me whether I had been reading of the last judgment, when all the dead would be raised, judged, and rewarded according to their works, &c. I should have answered in the affirmative, without the least hesitation. Such is the power of education and tradition. Surely it is out of my power to describe how differently things appear to me now. It seems that an immense dark cloud has passed away from the horizon, and that a serene sky and a clear sun adorn creation. I cannot but wonder, that this deception about the day of judgment should ever have been imbibed, or how it comes to pass that our learned and critical divines should not discover the error. Since I have carefully examined this subject, I have had no small conflict in my mind respecting the question, whether our learned divines are as ignorant as they seem to be. Can it be possible, that men who have all the means necessary in order to understand the scriptures, can be so far deceived as to believe what they uniformly hold up to the people concerning the judgment in the 25th of Matthew. I would not too much interrupt our conference on the scriptures, for I have more questions to ask you, and there are a number more passages which still appear dark to my

mind, but if you are willing I would thank you to give me your mind on the subject of my query just stated concerning our clergy. Do you think that they fully believe what they hold up to the people respecting these scriptures which I have been examining?

(To be Continued.)

Christian Messenger.

Philadelphia, Saturday, April 22, 1820.

That the public may know the weapons with which our enemies are disposed to contend for—they know not what—we publish the following letter, which, having been once sealed, and broken open, put into the hands of Dr. Griffin, and handed about among his friends, was obtained by a friend, and delivered to the Editor of the Messenger, to whom it was directed. A part of the signature had been torn off, leaving nothing of the surname except part of the initial, which appears to have been L. We presume that this was done by the writer, which, whoever he may be, is totally unknown to us. The letter needs no other comment.

Dear Sir

Addressing this to you needs no apology you know my friendship for you that is enough at present. I wish you to be upon your guard as you will be injured—I was accidentally in company lately and heard one call you Elymas the Sorcerer, and say you were a child of the devil and an enemy of all Righteousness. Would it not be better conceal yourself a little and go on slowly? It was also said it would seem like opposition to build near another place of worship and injure us with a subscription paper. Now it is my wish it could be right opposite Griffin he is our enemy it would it is believed drive him, but if it would injure us as to the grand thing money, *this must be considered.*

I also hear it said you told people you did not wish people to believe your doctrine but it was observed this must be a lie think of this as to its tendency, we know a lie is nothing, but—the thing is hide it.

Call as soon as you can, let us take a glass, and once more laugh at brimstone and the credulity of men. Depend upon it the clergy are scared sufficiently, the plan of sending them texts and taking them after yourself

was good it drew many to hear, the others were dosy there.

I am determined to support no brimstone doctrine and live easy and free.

I think H is suspicious he caught your eye as I was afraid so

Dear Abner

Rev A Kneeland as ever yours
Josh L

We have published this letter verbatim, without the least alteration, excepting we have filled up one or two abbreviations in spelling. After repeating that we have not the least knowledge either of the hand-writing, or its supposed author, we shall make no further comment than to publish the following from the Universalist Magazine, as its counterpart.

PROFANITY.

"Answer a fool according to his folly."

THE following, which was returned on one of our Subscription Papers, as it appears, from J. SHAW. Post Master, Bradleysville, (S. C.) shows not only the bitter spirit of the opposition, but the profanity in which it is willing to indulge.

Infernal Pit.
My Good Friend,—Continue as you have done widely to disseminate your very princely Magazine, and be assured that you shall shortly have one of the most exalted thrones amongst us.

Yours with all the love of a Fiend,
NICK LUCIFER.

REPLY; We have for a long time been of opinion, that it was not necessary to go into the future world to find the *infernal Pit* so much talked of, and we are now furnished with a demonstration of the correctness of this opinion; the above letter came by mail directly from that pit, where it appears there is a Post office and a Post Master. We have the satisfaction also to be certified that the Universalist Magazine does not please those who are in this *infernal Pit*, for the number of the Magazine we sent there, was sent back with the above letter: but it was not scorched, nor was the smell of fire or brimstone on it.

FROM THE UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE.

WRONG HABITS.

It is a wrong habit to be always finding fault with our neighbours; it is a wrong habit to be always finding fault with our children; it is a wrong habit to be always finding fault with our circumstances and

conditions; it is a wrong habit to be always finding fault with the present hard times; it is a wrong habit for preachers to be always finding fault with their hearers, who feed them and clothe them so bountifully, and treat them with so much respect and civility.

B.

POETS' CORNER.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

MORTALITY & IMMORTALITY.

IMMORTALITY.

FRAIL child of sorrow whence art thou?
And whither wilt thou wander now?
With countenance so sad;
Why are those eyes with weeping red?
Why should such scalding tears be shed?
While nature's face is glad.

MORTALITY.

I saw the rose in princely pride,
Bloom newly by the river side,
And breathe its fragrance round;
I look'd again, the garden's pride,
In one short hour had bloom'd and di'd,
Its leaves bestrew'd the ground.

I saw the fly on golden wing,
In the bright sunbeam sportive spring,
Along the glitt'ring stream;
I look'd again, the trout did seize,
All that surviv'd the ev'ning breeze,
Its life was but a dream.

I saw the forest's royal oak,
Which ne'er had felt the woodman's stroke,
Triumphant was it's reign;
I look'd, when lo! the tempest's shock,
Had rent it from the refted rock,
And stretch'd it on the plain.

I beheld in vigor rise,
Joy spark'd in his youthful eyes,
While he survey'd his power;
I look'd again, his cheek was wan,
The breath had from his nostrils gone,
His life was but an hour.

There you may view the spoiler's hand,
'Gainst which no earthly power can stand,
While death his vigils keep;
Why should I then my tears restrain,
Let me alone—'tis all in vain,
For I must longer weep.

IMMORTALITY.

The sun I saw set in the west,
When wear'd nature sunk to rest,
Had hush'd each murmur'ing sound;
I look'd again, grey night had fled,
While morn such heav'nly lustre shed,
That glory shone around.

The flower had faded on the stalk,
Its leaves beside the garden walk,
Lay scatter'd o'er the ground;

I look'd again, new buds had sprung,
Which round the stem in clusters hung,
With fragrant odours crown'd.

The silk worm when its task is done,
Weaves its own shroud, a silken cone,
Then lays its eggs and dies;
I look'd again, on painted wings,
From its frail tomb it sportive springs,
And flits toward the skies.

Thus shall it be with thee, O man!
For though this life is but a span,
Beset with toils and pain;
Beauty shall from its ashes burst,
And life spring up out of the dust,
To prove death's power vain.

For hark! the heav'nly Saviour comes,
To burst asunder vaults and tombs,
And raise all those who sleep;
Devoid of sickness, toil, and pain,
Death, ghastly death, has ceased his reign,
No longer shalt thou weep.

R. S.

(Selected.)

IMPROMPTU.

ON HEARING A SERMON OF THE REV. MR. —
WHEN from dread Sinai, thunders roar'd around,
Amaz'd the sinner stood and heard the sound:
But, when on Calv'ry's top the christian's eye,
Beholds a Saviour calm the stormy sky,
Bright hope succeeds to cheer his anxious heart,
And faith and charity their balms impart.
Thus from the pulpit, when fanatics rave,
And dare to curse when Jesus died to save:
Launching anathemas with every breath,
To frighten fools and babes with hell and death;
Preaching the law (the gospel quite forgot)
No hope of heaven to cheer the sinner's lot;
The christian, confident of Jesus' grace,
Behold, unaw'd, the angry preacher's face:
Bids him rail on, 'till lungs or hearers fail,
And then renew the oft repeated tale.
Jehovah slander'd looks indignant down,
Mercy, the brightest jewel of his crown—
"Cease railer—cease, he cries; no more rejoice,
To deal damnation with unhallow'd voice:
Go, imitate the Saviour's milder mein,
Who, to be lov'd, needs only to be seen.
Pray more, preach less, and penitently own,
That God has mercy, tho' THYSELF hast none."

TO OUR PATRONS.

The next number will complete the third quarter of the Messenger, and those subscribers who are in arrears are earnestly solicited to settle up to the present time, at least; and if others, who have been punctual from the first, could now pay in advance for the next quarter, it would greatly oblige the Proprietors, as Mr. Waldie, the late printer, has sold out his establishment, and is about leaving the city.

PRINTING

Neatly executed at this Office.